

Joint Appropriations Committee  
HB2, Natural Resources and Transportation Appropriation Subcommittee  
Montana Department of Agriculture Budget Hearing  
Invasive Species Budget  
January 29, 2009

Testimony of Celestine Duncan  
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I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Joint Appropriations Committee regarding Montana Department of Agriculture's proposed budget for Invasive Species. I have worked with invasive plant issues on the state, regional, and national level since 1983 and served as vice-chair of the National Invasive Species Committee for two years.

Invasive species issues have risen to the forefront of natural resource conservation concerns over the past decade. Statistics on economic and environmental impacts caused by invasive species such as spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, aquatic plants, diseases, and non-indigenous animals in Montana and throughout the United States are staggering. In Montana, the economic impact from spotted knapweed alone is estimated at \$42 million annually. The potential for introduction of new invaders including weeds such as yellow starthistle, and aquatic species such as zebra mussel, quagga mussel, and VHS virus warrant immediate action by the state to prevention introduction and spread. Prevention is the most effective and least costly strategy against invasive species because, once established, control is often extremely difficult or costly.

It is critical for Montana to address introduction of new invasive species by developing a comprehensive invasive species plan, implementing programs to stop introduction and transport of invasive species, enhancing public awareness and education on invasive species, and providing coordination and oversight of existing state, federal, and private invasive species efforts. Senate Bill No. 118 clearly defines purpose and need for an invasive species program with oversight by an Invasive Species Council. Funding is needed to initiate the invasive species program to protect the integrity of Montana's economy and natural resources. Revenue allocated now to stop introduction of new invasive species will save millions of dollars in the future.